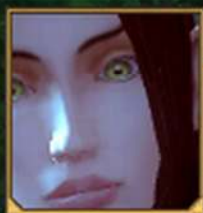


ANDROSE THE GIANT



By: **Fade**
Guild: *Legends*
Server: *Laurelin*



The cheek of a deer exploded, as a steel tipped arrow rifled through the animals head. The lolloping corpse crumpled to the ground like a puppet with its strings cut.

No sooner had the carcass hit the sodden floor, than it was being raised up into the air, like an offering to the Gods, held aloft by colossal hands, nurturing the fallen beast.

The hands began to dance around

the deer's injury, teasing and moulding in a fashion, slow and steady, firm but gentle.

It was as if the beasts head was made of clay and it was being restructured and renewed.

A long brooding chant echoed around the vicinity, as the hands enveloped the head, tunnel like, in a finger to thumb grasp. From within the clasp, a darting tongue lapped about and tasted its surroundings.

The mammoth palms peeled away gracefully, and the deer shook its head, twitched nervously, and bolted for cover.

It was as if not a scratch had been inflicted upon it.

The hands came to rest by a man's side, contented at a job well done. The hands belonged to a giant sized fellow, only known to a few as Androse.

ANDROSE THE GIANT

Fade swung down from the branch she was perched on, to survey her kill. Still proud at the accuracy of the shot, and hungry for some food after so long going without. Still wary, she would dart between tree to tree, using their trunks as cover.

As she approached the small clearing where she expected to find a culled deer, she found only flattened grass, sprinkled with blood. Even the arrow had gone, nothing but a few tufts of raven feather left where the flights had been shredded upon entry.

While her mind puzzled over where her quarry had gone, her stomach audibly yearned for the meat lost. The darkened forests of Caerwyn yield very little berries or fruits, the nearest morsel of nutrition coming from minute shoots that the boars like to eat. Perhaps its the soil, or the foul swamps that hinder the spread of fruit bearing foliage?

No matter what, Fade had spent best part of this afternoon, stalking a suitable deer, picking the right moment to strike, and now, she would go hungry.

Large tracks near the kill site, suggest something enormous dragged the fallen beast away, surely Ogres and Trolls wouldn't be this far south?

Besides the freshly laid tracks didn't give off the scent of a dark largekin. It was more human, pungent in its own right, but not acrid.



ANDROSE THE GIANT

Fade took out a spare coiled bow string and started gnawing on the core to satisfy longing for something to chew. Besides, it comforted her. And with string in mouth, she bounded up into the tree canopy, to find a place to rest.

Perhaps she'll hunt tomorrow and have some luck?

Androse had a gift. Bestowed upon him at birth. It was a gift of growth, although tiny and vulnerable at birth, he grew throughout his childhood at a rapid rate.

When it was noticeable, the stigma of witchcraft was bestowed upon him and his family, and they were forced to leave their home to seek refuge in the forests.

His mother frail and his father long dead, it wasn't long before Androse was alone in the forest, and still growing.

His life was gentle, his soul carefree, his heart captured by the spirit of the forest and its dwellers.

Long gone where the times when he wished for human companionship, humans had spurned him and only seemed to bring trouble.

The
Lord of the Rings
Online
Shadows of Angmar

ANDROSE THE GIANT

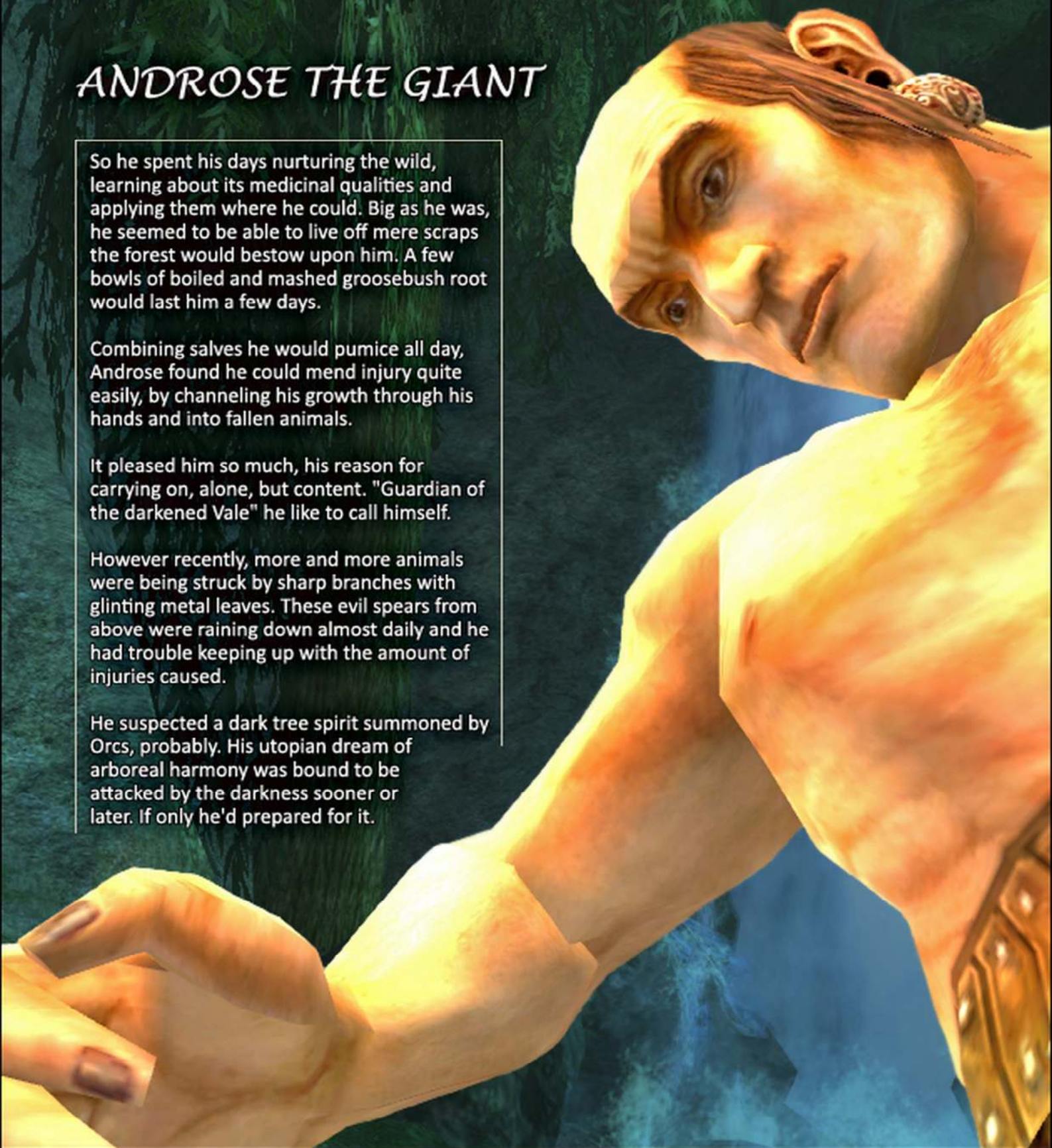
So he spent his days nurturing the wild, learning about its medicinal qualities and applying them where he could. Big as he was, he seemed to be able to live off mere scraps the forest would bestow upon him. A few bowls of boiled and mashed goosebush root would last him a few days.

Combining salves he would pumice all day, Androse found he could mend injury quite easily, by channeling his growth through his hands and into fallen animals.

It pleased him so much, his reason for carrying on, alone, but content. "Guardian of the darkened Vale" he like to call himself.

However recently, more and more animals were being struck by sharp branches with glinting metal leaves. These evil spears from above were raining down almost daily and he had trouble keeping up with the amount of injuries caused.

He suspected a dark tree spirit summoned by Orcs, probably. His utopian dream of arboreal harmony was bound to be attacked by the darkness sooner or later. If only he'd prepared for it.



ANDROSE THE GIANT

Icy cold dawn arrives and shards of sunlight twinkle through the canopy to wake Fade. Her stomach is also aroused, and begins cramping on a regular basis.

Nimble clambering over tree top she spans a wide arc, always alert, looking for any movement below. Dropping to the ground in a hushed dismount, Fade spied a rather plump rabbit nuzzling around a clearing of vegetation.

With bow drawn she moistens the string with her tongue, tasting her prey roasted on an open camp fire.

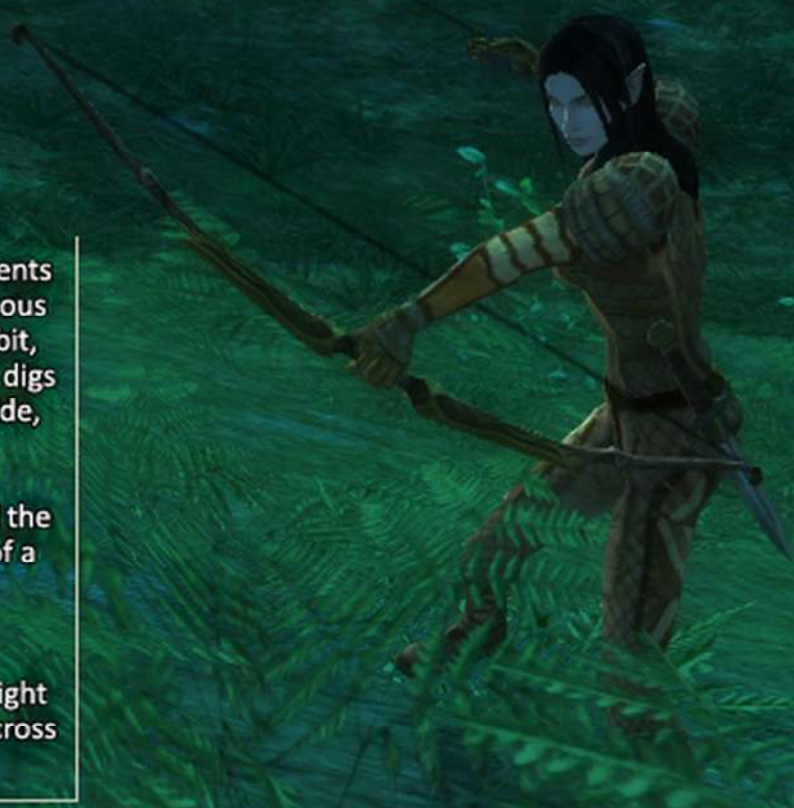
Her arrow nocked silently, the bow whispers to her as she draws it back. A clean kill, a head shot will ensure no suffering.

Fade squints and looses the arrow at her potential meal. Outrage befalls her moments before the arrow strikes, when an enormous hand is thrust forward sheltering the rabbit, a flesh built cave to hide in. Fade's arrow digs into the hand but ricochet's off to the side, with only a mild scratch to show for it.

In mere moments, the hand has scooped the rabbit away, and only the ghost rustling of a bush is left behind.

Fade tries to follow this protector, but although heavy on foot, he seems to be light on tracks, and soon the trail goes cold, across a stream.

(to be continued)



ANDROSE THE GIANT, PART II



By: **Fade**
Guild: *Legends*
Server: *Laurelin*

(Continued)

Androse is sure a dark imp stalks the canopy top, he can see it made visible when it moves. His imagination begins to spiral wildly out of control and he conjurs up armies of these tree borne imps slaying all the forest fauna.

This makes him angry, an emotion Androse has not dealt with since the death of his mother. These imps will not plague this forest.

He decides he will hunt the imps down, at night, climbing the trees if he has to. He fashions some rope shoes to help with trunk climbing and gathers up his wooden tools to use as weapons if he has to. Androse waits patiently for night.

Fade is weakening, she can feel it, her bow is heavy and cumbersome, her feet slip where once they would hold fast. She needed food desperately. Perhaps a night hunt was needed?

Whatever it was guarding the beasts of this Vale, she needed to catch it off guard so she could survive.

Dropping to low canopy, trunk jumping, Fade made silent progress through the trees. Her elvish vision making the task a lot easier since any life would shimmer and glow slightly.

At last, she spotted a badger making its way to a ground swell, no doubt a place where it

ANDROSE THE GIANT, PART II

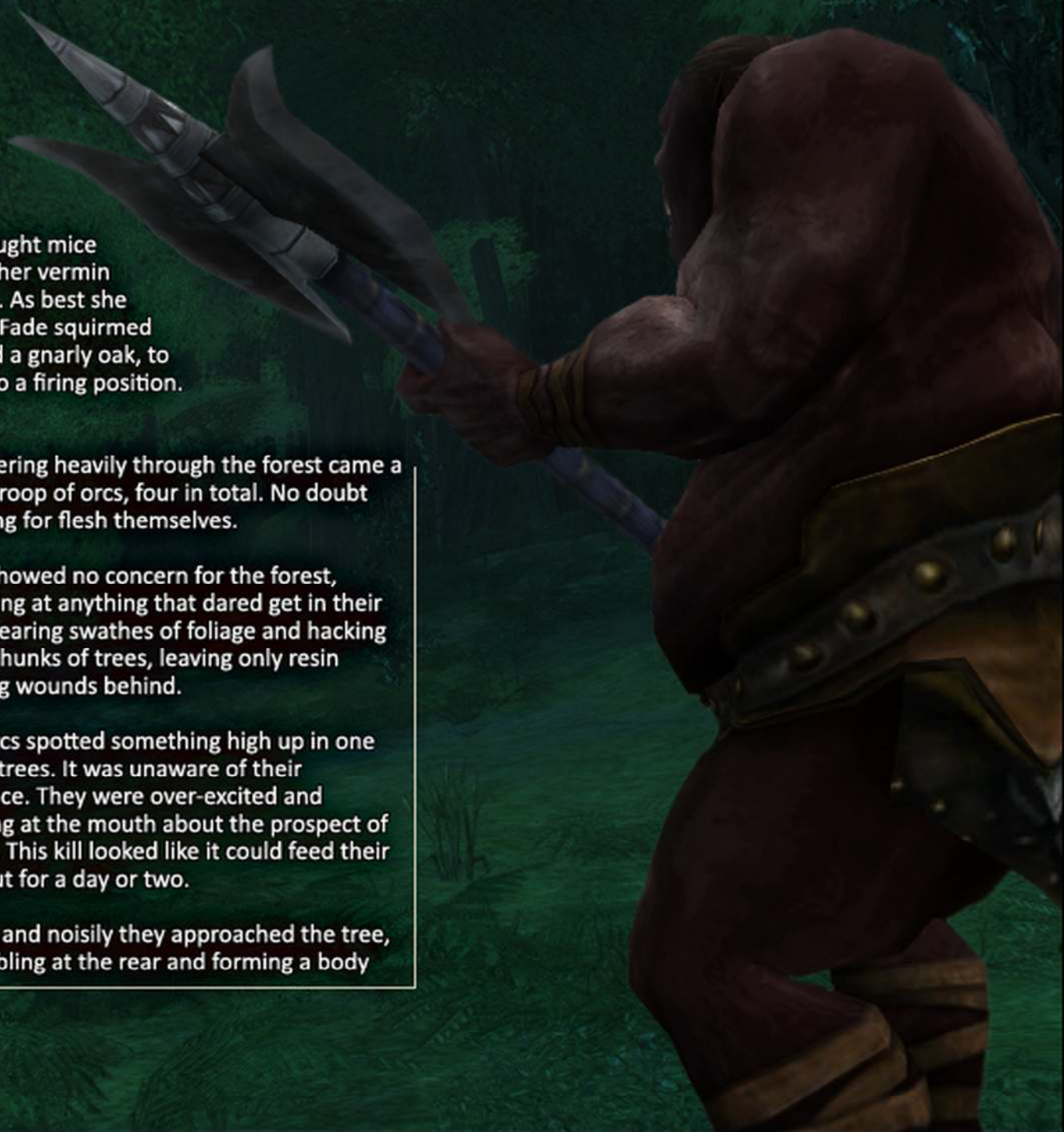
has caught mice and other vermin before. As best she could, Fade squirmed around a gnarly oak, to get into a firing position.

Clambering heavily through the forest came a small troop of orcs, four in total. No doubt scouting for flesh themselves.

They showed no concern for the forest, chopping at anything that dared get in their way, clearing swathes of foliage and hacking away chunks of trees, leaving only resin seeping wounds behind.

The Orcs spotted something high up in one of the trees. It was unaware of their presence. They were over-excited and foaming at the mouth about the prospect of a feed. This kill looked like it could feed their clan hut for a day or two.

Slowly and noisily they approached the tree, assembling at the rear and forming a body



ANDROSE THE GIANT, PART II

based platform, climbing one onto the others, to reach. They thought to try and pull it out of the tree and savage it on ground rather than clumsily fighting it in the canopy itself. The Orc on top, reached forward and attempted to grasp a limb.

Fade quivering with deprivation, was pulling her bowstring again, but without the strength to gain full extension. Her mind was focussed on exerting every ounce of will she had left, to make the strike.

The badger waddled into the clearing, and Fade let the arrow loose, expelling all her hope behind that arrow. She must eat soon. The arrow struck the badger behind the ruffled collar and it yelped as it choked for air. Twitching and squirming for a moment till its life ebbed away.

Fade closed her eyes in relief, this kill will save me.

Tugged back into reality, something grasped her leg brutally. She immediately thought it was the protector and his huge crushing hands. She fell backwards from the canopy and hit the ground hard, blacking out.

The Orcs had hit her twice on the head again just to make sure she was out. They wouldn't kill her yet, they wanted to keep her flesh succulent and fresh, till they manage to drag it back to the clan tent.



ANDROSE THE GIANT, PART II

Perhaps they'd have some of the flesh on the way though, it had been a long time since they felt pulsing blood gush down their gullets.

They started to strip the leather Armour from her body, licking at the wound on her head, to taste the crimson nectar and to fuel the excitement of the catch.

Taking a crude blade they raised it to chop a leg off at the knee, they could satiate themselves with that for the journey and claim it was lost in the confusion of the melee.

A big hand clasped the raised blade from behind and crumpled it as if it were a dock leaf. A mammoth kick landed on the back of the surprised Orc, snapping the spine and stomping it to the ground, crushing it dead.

A wooden spoon with its handle sharpened at one end was jabbed into another orcs throat, it staggered backwards and squealed like a stuck hog, gurgling to its grave.

One of the Orcs fled in panic, whelping loudly. Finally, another huge hand descended from above, and wrapped its fingers around the skull of the remaining Orc, the fingers began to grip hard, like a five pronged vice.

The hand applied pressure steadily and calmly with almost mechanical precision. The Orc's head was crushed and contorted, until

ANDROSE THE GIANT, PART II



the inner contents spilled out readily, through whatever broken gaps were made to its outer shell.

With a snapping motion, the five fingers released their grip and shook themselves clean, spraying the bloodied matter and fluids around.

Androse the giant sighed in relief that the carnage was over. He looked down at the prone figure, Armourless and he saw that she was as vulnerable as any injured animal in his forest.

This was no dark imp that plagued the area, this was an emaciated elven girl who was in some desperate need of help.

Androse smeared a salve over his palms and gently placed his large hand over her head, massaging it, in very tiny circles.

As he raised his hand away, he could see she was stirring, so he quickly gathered her Armour together and with the corpse of the slain badger, laid them neatly beside her.

Looking around for a suitable gap in the flora, Androse disappeared off into the thick forest depths.

(To be continued)

ANDROSE THE GIANT, PART III



By: *Fade*
Guild: *Legends*
Server: *Laurelin*

(Continued)

As she lazily regained her sight, Fade caught a glimpse of the protector, the owner of those massive hands, a gentle giant who seemed to have saved her from these foul orcs.

Woozy and unsteady she pulled on her Armour, grabbed her bow, and saw the dead badger laid out like an offering of peace. To Fade, it was a meal fit for a Queen. She hurried off into full cover as soon as she could.

Making her way to a shaded mountain crag with enough tree cover so that she could light a campfire and start preparing and roasting the meat. She devoured the meal greedily, but with the satisfaction of knowing that it was blessed by the protector of the forest. Whoever he may be.



ANDROSE THE GIANT, PART III

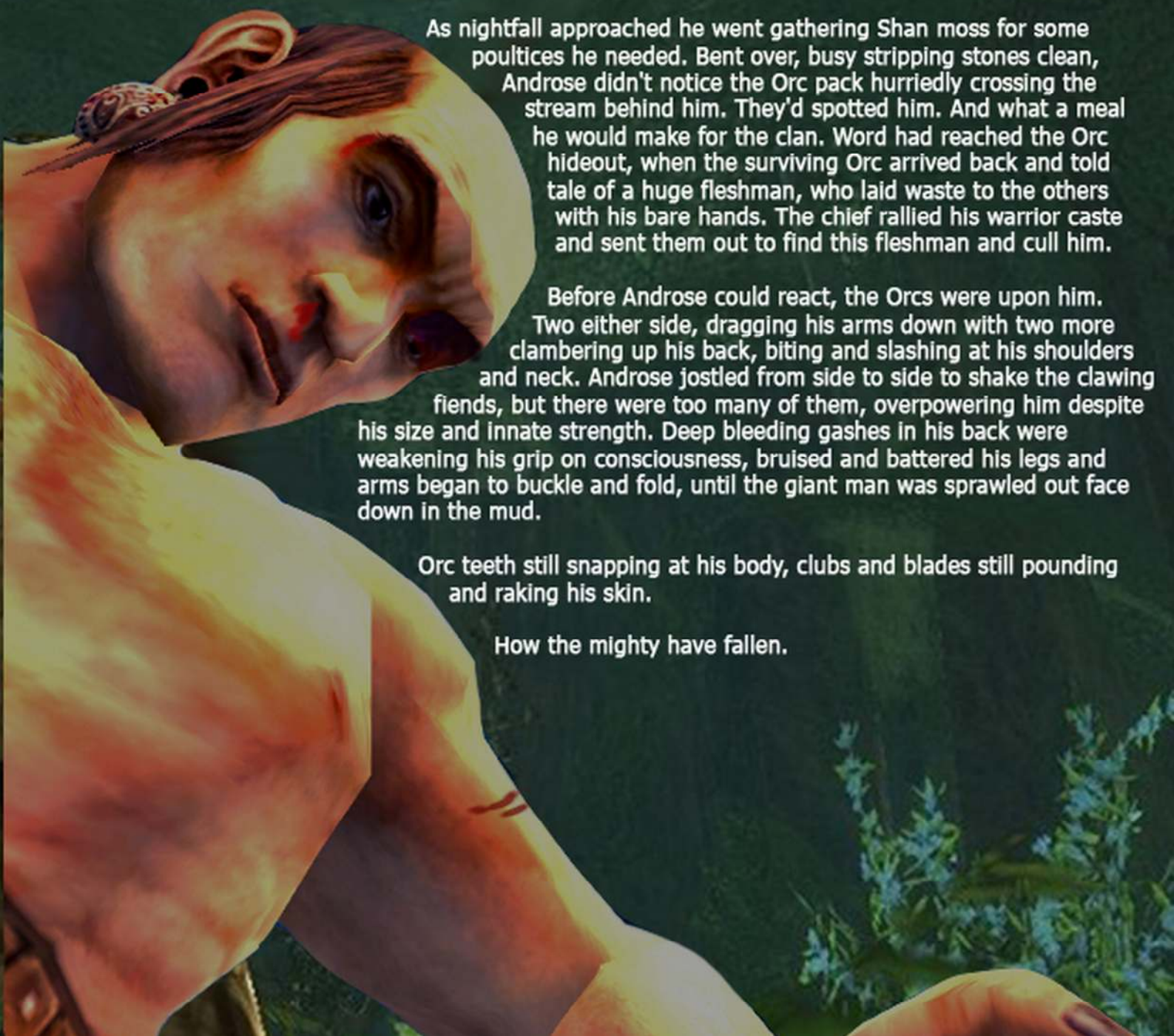
The following day, no splintered attacks came from above to fell the beasts of the forest. Androse nodded contently as he went about his business.

As nightfall approached he went gathering Shan moss for some poultices he needed. Bent over, busy stripping stones clean, Androse didn't notice the Orc pack hurriedly crossing the stream behind him. They'd spotted him. And what a meal he would make for the clan. Word had reached the Orc hideout, when the surviving Orc arrived back and told tale of a huge fleshman, who laid waste to the others with his bare hands. The chief rallied his warrior caste and sent them out to find this fleshman and cull him.

Before Androse could react, the Orcs were upon him. Two either side, dragging his arms down with two more clambering up his back, biting and slashing at his shoulders and neck. Androse jostled from side to side to shake the clawing fiends, but there were too many of them, overpowering him despite his size and innate strength. Deep bleeding gashes in his back were weakening his grip on consciousness, bruised and battered his legs and arms began to buckle and fold, until the giant man was sprawled out face down in the mud.

Orc teeth still snapping at his body, clubs and blades still pounding and raking his skin.

How the mighty have fallen.



ANDROSE THE GIANT, PART III

A blazing sprite seemed to shoot past high above the fighting. It erupted into a plume of sparks falling to the ground and igniting all dry material. Another burst and more sparks. Just enough to worry the orcs and cause them to flee in fear. Androse rolled over on to his side, parts of his clothing burning slightly, fizzling in the pool beneath him. Down from a high treetop leapt Fade, two more flame arrows smouldering in her back mounted quiver. Androse moaned.

Using all her strength Fade managed to roll Androse into the muddy waters covering him in thick peat based bog. Androse became a little more lucid, his eyelids flickering momentarily, his body shaking in shock. Fade splashed muddy water on to his face and silently gestured for him to stand up.

Androse didn't think he could muster enough strength to get up, he was still bleeding heavily. But after a stumble he rose more determined and tottered about on his feet. Fade pushed him towards a dense area of forest, where a large oak tree stood. Androse bumbled about and staggered in that direction and the little elf girl encouraged him with her boot.



ANDROSE THE GIANT, PART III

He wasn't sure whether he was awake or it was some kind of dream. But the pain was real. Before he made it to the thick stumped tree, he could see the elf girl flitting around the tree trunk. Fade was stripping great wads of bark off the tree whole. As tall as she could make them. Her blade carving into the tree just enough to take the top layer of bark off, that would hold fast as a single intact piece.

Again and again she did this, stacking up quite a pile of thick bark strips. Androse fell forward and collapsed against the bare trunk, he managed to twist his body round to see the elf enclosing him in these strips of bark. Initially he began to panic, but Fade touched her lips with her fingers in a hushed gesture, and calmed the battered giant man. Fade danced around him, panelling him up against the tree, and covering him with the bark strips. She daubed wads of mud in between to make the strips stick to him. Once he was encased completely, she unfurled some bow string from her belt pouch and began to tie the covered man to the tree itself, grafting as best she could the "tree man" to the tree. She jumped up over Androse and into the canopy of this bold arboreal resident, where she cut leaves rapidly and dropped them on top of Androse, covering any remaining body parts that could be easily seen.

Once he was hidden, she bounded across to other trees and climbed high to gain a vantage point.



ANDROSE THE GIANT, PART III

Androse wasn't totally comfortable, and he wasn't quite sure what was going on. His wounds were still bleeding, the pulsing pain he felt in all his limbs told him he was in a bad way. He kept zoning in and out of lucidity, he couldn't willingly stop himself from moaning to cope with the pain. Spooked but not dissuaded, the Orcs returned tentatively. They split up and scattered more, searching the area as they moved, to determine what sort of sorcerer conjured these flaming projectiles.

They expected the fleshman to be still laying there prone and bloodied.

They were enraged to find he wasn't. Sniffing the air, desperately trying to gain the fleshman's scent, they paused when they heard a muffled moaning coming from a dark forested enclosure. Cautiously they investigated the noise.

The Orc at the tail end of the party dropped to the ground silently, an arrow protruding from his face. Unaware, the remaining orcs were lured onwards towards the siren call of an injured victim. This time two orcs fell in rapid succession, arrow borne whispers flashed by and stuck the first in the throat, and the second in a soft point of his armour under the arm and into the ribcage.



ANDROSE THE GIANT, PART III

The two remaining orcs turned and panicked.

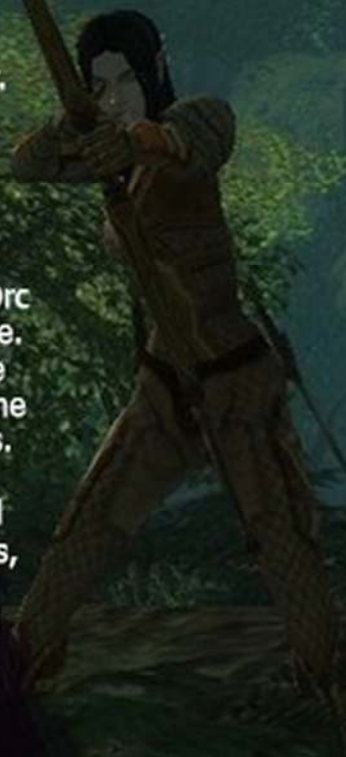
Weaving back and forth trying to search out the source of these lethal projectiles.

They crouched low and leapt around, the moaning now haunting them, stalking them. In terror, they reeled backwards and knocked into the large oak tree.

The slender dark figure of Fade dropped out of the canopy and landed softly like a cat on all paws. The moaning behind the orcs grew louder and more constant.

The dark figure approached them menacingly. The orcs panicked again, and rushed forward to attack. With a swift motion, Fade parried the blow and took his arm off at the joint, with her razor sharp dagger. Knocking him to the ground as he stumbled past in pain, she landed a side kick on the second advancing Orc sending him reeling back towards the oak tree. Turning to face the back of the first Orc, Fade sunk the dagger deep into the base of its spine and pushed downwards disengaging its pelvis.

As the other Orc hit the tree, Androse howled and toppled forward snapping the bow strings, releasing him and bringing his full weight to bear down upon the orcs body. A jet of blood spewed from the Orcs mouth as its internal organs were crushed and chopped by its own skeletal shards.



ANDROSE THE GIANT, PART III

Androse shook his head clear, the caked mud had helped stem the bleeding, and his natural ability to regenerate had begun to reinvigorate him. He knelt down, catching his breath and pausing to look at the elf who saved him.

She walked towards him, kissed his bloodied cheek, and without a word placed a wad of Shan moss in his large protective hand. He closed his fingers around the precious gift, cherishing the offer.

She turned and walked slowly away, increasing the pace until she was running, fast enough to bound up into the canopy. And she was gone...

Androse never saw her again.

But every year he would pay tribute to her by culling and eating a badger in her honour.

END

